

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SAJ-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 NIC-01 ACDA-19 DRC-01 SAM-01

/137 W

----- 096266

R 260847Z MAR 74

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 101

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

CONFIDENTIAL HONG KONG 3376

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, UR

SUBJECT: HELICOPTER INCIDENT IN CHINA

SUMMARY: PEKING WILL LIKELY EXPLOIT FURTHER THE RECENT HELICOPTER INCIDENT. SO FAR THERE IS NO SUGGESTION THAT CHINESE SEE EPISODE AS FOREBODING AGGRESSIVE SOVIET MILITARY ACTION. END SUMMARY.

1. THE STATEMENT IN THE MARCH 25 PRC PROTEST ON THE HELICOPTER INCIDENT THAT SOVIET AIR INTRUSIONS HAVE GROWN "MORE FREQUENT AND UNBRIDLED" IS FIRST SPECIFIC PUBLIC PEKING CHARGE OF THIS SORT SINCE BORDER NEGOTIATIONS BEGAN IN OCTOBER 1969. THERE WERE INDICATIONS DURING THIS PERIOD OF PEKING'S KNOWLEDGE OF INCURSIONS BY SOVIET AIRCRAFT BUT UNTIL THE RECENT EPISODE NO PUBLIC COMPLAINT HAD BEEN VOICED. IF, AS CHARGED SUCH  
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RECONNISANCE INTRUSIONS HAVE BEEN INCREASING OVER THE PAST YEAR, PEKING'S FAILURE TO PROTEST SUGGEST THAT IT

WAS BIDING ITS TIME UNTIL ONE OF THE OFFENDING CRAFT COULD BE CAPTURED OR SHOT DOWN.

2. THE INCIDENT ADDS ANOTHER DOSE OF VENOM TO SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS AND WILL BE EXPLOITED BY THE CHINESE IN THE THIRD WORLD AS WELL AS AT HOME AS PROOF OF SOVIET SUBVERSION AND INTRIGUE. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE CHINESE WILL LINK THE DIPLOMATIC SPY CASE OF LAST JANUARY TO THE HELICOPTER FLIGHT. (THE NATIVE CHINESE AGENT IN THE CASE WAS ALLEGEDLY INFILTRATED INTO CHINA IN THE GENERAL AREA WHERE THE COPTER WAS SEIZED.)

3. SO FAR AS WE KNOW, NO SOVIET MILITARY PERSONNEL WERE CAPTURED IN THE 1969 SINO-SOVIET BORDER WAR. THE HELICOPTER CREW MEMBERS ARE THUS CHINA'S FIRST SOVIET MILITARY PRISONERS. THE PROTEST NOTE DID NOT FOCUS PRC CONDEMNATION ON THE CAPTURED CREW MEMBERS, SUGGESTING THAT THEIR FATE HAD NOT BEEN DETERMINED. IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT THE CHINESE WILL HOLD A SHOW TRIAL, ALTHOUGH SOME IN PEKING MIGHT FEEL THAT THIS WOULD BE PUSHING THE SOVIETS TOO FAR.

4. WHILE THE PRC NOTE CHARGED THAT THE ALLEGED AIR INTRUSIONS REVEALED MOSCOW'S "CONSISTENT POSITION OF DISREGARDING CHINA'S SOVEREIGNTY AND BEING HOSTILE TO THE CHINESE PEOPLE," THERE WAS NO SUGGESTION IN THE MESSAGE OF A CHINESE VIEW THAT THE INCIDENT AND ITS BACKGROUND FOREBODE AGGRESSIVE SOVIET MILITARY ACTIONS.

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## Message Attributes

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